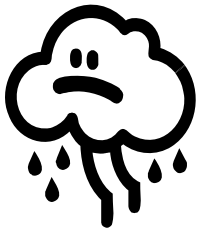


Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips Friday, December 1, 2006

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Prepared by the
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Twins, 8, beaten, cut and burned

Adoptive mother held on torture raps

BY DAN CORTEZ
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

December 1, 2006

The process to terminate the parental rights of the adoptive mother of two bruised and burned 8-year-old girls has begun as new details emerged Thursday of the abuse authorities say the twins endured at her hands.

The children are now in a foster care home, and Tamika S. Williams, 30, of Warren faces torture and child abuse charges. She is scheduled for a preliminary exam Tuesday in 37th District Court and could lose her parental rights in another hearing Dec. 15.

The girls told Child Protective Services that Williams tortured them for more than a year, according to a report contained in a juvenile court filing.

According to the report, Williams used them as ashtrays, stabbed them with glass and knives, burned them with cigarette lighters and beat them with exercise equipment at her Toepfer Road home. They also said she forced them to sleep on the floor without blankets, choked them with a belt and bound their arms and legs with rope.

In court filings, Williams said the twins harmed themselves and that she didn't notice the burns and bruises that investigators said covered the girls "from head to toe."

Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said Williams began beating the girls almost as soon as she got custody in early 2005, but the abuse wasn't discovered until two weeks ago, because the girls changed schools frequently.

"She's been moving every so often to stay ahead of the game," Smith said, adding that the girls are doing well now.

The twins told investigators that Williams and a woman they called their grandmother threatened to kill them if they reported the abuse. Nobody besides Williams has been charged in connection with the girls' injuries.

Williams was arrested Nov. 22 and could spend the rest of her life in prison if convicted of the torture charges. The child abuse charges carry a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison upon conviction.

Ronald Goldstein, who will serve as Williams' court-appointed attorney, said Thursday that he had not met with his client but expected to do so today.

Williams is being held in the Macomb County Jail with bond set at \$1 million.

Contact **DAN CORTEZ** at 586-469-1827 or dcortez@freepress.com.



Tamika S. Williams of Warren said girls harmed themselves.

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December 1, 2006

Twin girls suffered 'horrific' abuse Authorities say Warren case ranks among worst they've seen; adoptive mom charged, could get life.

Christina Stolarz and George Hunter / The Detroit News

WARREN -- The bruises, welts and cigarette burns covering the bodies of twin 8-year-old girls made even veteran investigators cringe.

"It's horrific," Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said. "The girls were beaten with a foot-long spring that's used for exercise, and you can clearly see the spring marks on their bodies. There are fresh bruises and spots where the girls were burned several times by cigarettes."

The girls, who were adopted in 2005 by Tamika Williams, are living in a foster home after Williams was charged with what local authorities say is one of the worst cases of child abuse they've seen.

"The girls feel like they've been rescued," Smith said. "But they're understandably a little scared still. Apparently, the woman told the girls, 'If you ever tell anyone what I've done to you, I'll hunt you down at your new home " and kill you.'"

Child welfare advocates say the case is an example of a problem in the state's foster care and adoption system. According to relatives, Williams adopted the girls while they were in foster care at a home in Southfield.

"How many more children have to suffer this way before Michigan gets the message?" said Richard Wexler, director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform in Alexandria, Va.

"Over and over and over again, Michigan takes away children (from their birth parents), often needlessly, only to have them severely harmed or killed in substitute care."

Michigan's child welfare system was thrust into the national spotlight recently when 7-year-old Ricky Holland was killed by his adopted mother, Lisa Holland. She was sentenced this week to life in prison.

State officials removed the Williams girls from Warrendale Elementary School on Nov. 16, the day after teachers first reported seeing the girls' injuries.

Williams, 30, was arrested Nov. 22, and is in Macomb County Jail in lieu of \$1 million bond. She was charged Wednesday with child abuse and torture.

Williams is the second person in Michigan to be charged under a torture law that went into effect in May, Smith said.

"Without that statute, we would have had to charge her with child abuse," Smith said. "But child abuse doesn't encompass what this woman did."

Child abuse is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. If Williams is convicted of torture, she could spend the rest of her life behind bars.

State officials should be more careful about who they allow to foster or adopt children, Wexler said.

Michigan Department of Human Services spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet said she could not comment about the twins.

Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm, said she was unfamiliar with details in the Williams case and declined to discuss any similarities with the Ricky Holland case.

Smith said Williams punished the girls because they took food home from school.

"They looked emaciated," Smith said. "They looked extremely underweight. People at the school told us they noticed the girls hoarding food at lunch, putting it in their pockets to take home with them. That's one of the things that led them to call child protective services."

But Williams' family members and friends on Thursday defended Williams, and they blamed the children for much of the abuse.

Shavon Hamilton, Williams' friend, said the girls often would "beat each other like they were enemies. They are abusive kids toward each other."

The twins had been abused prior to living with Williams, according to Williams' cousin, Linda Taylor.

"The girls had permanent scars before coming into Tamika's care," Taylor said.

Smith rejected the claim that all the girls' wounds were sustained prior to them moving in with Williams.

"These are fresh bruises," Smith said. "They can try to deny it all they want, but nobody can deny those bruises."

East Detroit Public Schools Assistant Superintendent Lois Johnson agreed the girls' injuries were "pretty serious."

"The teachers did their job," Johnson said. "We're just saddened that something like this happens with children. That's why teachers have to be so aware."

The third-graders were enrolled in the East Detroit school district in February, and Johnson said there was no indication of abuse prior to the teachers' first report on Nov. 15.

But Smith said the abuse has been going on since Williams adopted the girls.

Neighbors said the girls never played outside. "I'm sick to my stomach over this," said Jennifer Heckmann, who lives two houses from Williams.

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Mich. Woman Sentenced For Drugging Child

By the Associated Press

November 30, 2006

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. - A suburban Detroit woman who admitted injecting heroin into her 12-year-old nephew and giving him and her 15-year-old niece heroin and cocaine was sentenced to eight years in prison.

Jacqueline Ellen Vuich, 26, pleaded guilty Nov. 2 to delivery of narcotics to a minor, first- and second-degree child abuse, maintaining a drug house and keeping a person younger than 16 in a home where prostitution occurred. She was sentenced Wednesday by Macomb County Circuit Judge Matt Switalski.

Vuich's daughter lived at a home rented by Vuich's mother. Vuich was visiting Jan. 24 when she injected her nephew with heroin as he ate dinner. He was treated for a heroin overdose at a nearby hospital.

Jan Ruby Catton, 47, Vuich's mother, was charged with maintaining a drug house and a house of prostitution, and with second-degree child abuse. She pleaded no contest and was sentenced Wednesday to two years' probation.

"She is probably not a good caregiver," Switalski said of Catton, who has lost custody of the eight grandchildren under her care.

"I am sorry," said Catton. "I tried to help."

Defense Attorney Timothy Barkovic said Vuich's upbringing was a factor in her behavior. "All of this stemmed from the environment she grew up in," he told The Detroit News.

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Warren Woman Gets 8 Years For Injecting Nephew With Heroin

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. -- A woman who admitted injecting heroin into her 12-year-old nephew and giving drugs to him and her 15-year-old niece has received an eight-year prison sentence.

Jacqueline Vuich, 26, pleaded guilty earlier to drug, child abuse and other charges.

The drug offenses happened in Warren at the house of Vuich's 47-year-old mother, Jan Catton.

The mother pleaded no-contest to maintaining a drug house and a house of prostitution and received two years' probation.

A Macomb County judge issued the sentences on Wednesday in Mount Clemens.

RELATED TO STORY



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Article published Dec 1, 2006

Tesen trial delayed to February

By Lisa Roose-Church
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

The trial for a Tyrone Township man accused of molesting his son has been adjourned to February to allow the prosecutor's office to appeal the disqualification of one of their own.

Assistant Prosecutor William Vaillencourt said Thursday the Michigan Court of Appeals on Wednesday denied his office's request to appeal Livingston County Circuit Judge David Reader's decision to disqualify another prosecutor from trying the rape case.

Vaillencourt asked Reader to put the case against Daniel Sanford Tesen on hold pending an appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Defense attorney Mack Spickard of Howell supported Vaillencourt's request.

Nevertheless, Reader denied the request, but moved the trial from Dec. 11 to Feb. 5. The judge said he would reconsider his decision if the Supreme Court decided to hear the prosecutor's appeal. That decision could be months away.

Tesen, 36, is accused of multiple counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct for allegedly raping his now 13-year-old son in April.

In September, at the defense's request, Reader disqualified Assistant Prosecutor Dan Rose from trying the rape case because he interviewed the then-12-year-old accuser.

Spickard successfully argued to disqualify Rose, claiming Rose essentially acted as a police officer, not a prosecutor, when he interviewed the youth.

Prosecutors claim Spickard should have filed an appeal in Circuit Court, asking the judge to review District Judge L. Suzanne Geddis' decision on the same issue.

Geddis ruled in July that Rose could remain on the case, although she also found that Rose blurred the line between interviewing a witness to determine what charges, if any, to issue and becoming the investigating officer of the case.

Rose maintains there is no reason to call him as a witness because there were five witnesses to the interview. Those witnesses testified in a hearing before Geddis that they each took notes about the teen's allegations, but some admitted that they were not present for the entire interview, which lasted more than an hour.

Spickard countered that those five witnesses cannot testify to Rose's rationale behind certain questions he posed to the teen because they would not know what thoughts were in Rose's mind.

The alleged incidents came to light in May after the teen, who previously lived in Las Vegas with his mother, passed a note to a neighbor. The note claimed he was being abused by his father. The neighbor's parents called 911.

Tesen is charged with one count each of distributing obscene matter to a child, third-degree child abuse and truancy for failing to send his son to school. He also faces 14 counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which are punishable by up to life in prison.

Contact Lisa Roose-Church at (517) 552-2846, or at lrchurch@gannett.com.

Friday, December 01, 2006

Macomb Briefs

Roseville

Police talk distraught man off of house roof

Roseville Police said officers had to talk a man off the roof of his house Wednesday. The man was trying to keep state Department of Human Services officials from removing his child from the home on the 25000 block of Fern east of Hayes and north of 10 Mile, said Roseville Deputy Police Chief Anthony Cona. The baby's father took the child and climbed through an upstairs window to get to the roof. Officers spoke with the father and after five minutes, he agreed to return inside and turn the baby over to child protective services. The baby was uninjured and police plan to speak with prosecutors to determine if any charges should be filed against the man.

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Lawmakers again try to limit welfare benefits to 4 years

LANSING, Mich. -- Republican lawmakers on Thursday again voted to limit welfare recipients to four years of cash assistance, but it was unclear whether Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm would support the measure.

The GOP-controlled state House voted 61-41 to pass a four-year lifetime welfare limit. The limit wouldn't apply to the disabled, the mentally ill and others who meet certain guidelines.

The measure also sets up penalties for recipients who don't comply with work or educational requirements. The first violation would halt cash payments for three months, the second for another three months and the third for a year _ with the clock on the four-year limit continuing to run.

Parts of the state's welfare law are set to expire at year's end. Last December, legislators had extended welfare provisions for one year after Granholm vetoed a four-year limit on cash assistance.

Under the new bill, recipients could apply for a fifth year of cash assistance if they haven't been sanctioned and the job market is down.

Republicans said they changed the bill to exempt more adults from the four-year limit and from a state program that seeks to find jobs for welfare recipients, including those with learning disabilities, certain physical limitations and chronic mental health problems.

It also would temporarily freeze the four-year limit for mothers with children under age 3 and recipients on short-term disability or living in counties with an unemployment rate above 9 percent.

"Without penalties or restrictions, there is no motivating factor for a person to stop their dependence on welfare," said Rep. Jerry Kooiman, R-Grand Rapids, the bill's sponsor.

The limit wouldn't be retroactive. It would begin with the rollout of a new program that concentrates more on helping train and educate welfare recipients rather than just finding them a job. The bill would expire in 2011, meaning the Legislature would need to renew it before anyone is actually kicked off welfare.

The Granholm administration didn't say Thursday whether it supported or opposed the bill, but Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow said she would work with the Legislature on welfare reforms that protect children and help families become self-sufficient.

The GOP-led state Senate, meanwhile, unanimously passed a bill that would extend the welfare law for another nine months in case the Legislature and Granholm can't agree on time limits and sanctions. Granholm has said she favors a time limit but one with exceptions.

Senate Families and Human Services Chairman Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, also negotiated the House bill and said he's comfortable people who can't work would continue getting cash payments.

"Welfare is meant to be temporary," he said. "But this protects people who can't move forward."

As of October, Michigan had 88,133 households receiving welfare payments. Those households contain 238,964 individuals, most of them children.

Republicans have said tougher sanctions and limits can help recipients become more self-sufficient, but Democrats have criticized GOP efforts as too harsh.

Kooiman said Michigan is the only state in the region without time limits for welfare. Indiana has a two-year limit, Ohio a three-year limit and Illinois a five-year limit, he said.

Seven Democrats joined the Republican majority in supporting the package's main bill. Democrats voting 'yes' were Kathy Angerer of Dundee, Pam Byrnes of Dexter, Kate Ebli of Monroe, John Espinoza of Croswell, Gary McDowell of Rudyard, Joel Sheltrown of West Branch and Dudley Spade of Tipton.

Eight lawmakers didn't vote. They were Fran Amos, R-Waterford; Brenda Clack, D-Flint; Bill Huizenga, R-Zeeland; Roger Kahn, R-Saginaw Township; Chris Kolb, D-Ann Arbor; Leslie Mortimer, R-Horton; Mike Murphy, D-Lansing; and Jim Plakas, D-Garden City.

The welfare bills are House Bills 6580 and 6587.

David Eggert can be reached at [deggert\(at\)ap.org](mailto:deggert(at)ap.org)

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

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Gongwer -- November 30, 2006

WELFARE PROVISIONS PASS A DIVIDED HOUSE

Lawmakers in the House placed welfare reforms on their dance card once again Thursday, but the bipartisan measures received a mixed reaction from members.

Up for a vote were HB 6580 and HB 6587, which passed 61-41 and 64-39, respectively, despite being introduced by a Republican and a Democrat. In the Senate, members passed SB 1500, which extends the sunset on Work First requirements to September 30, 2007. In the House version, a sunset of Work First requirements would be scheduled for September 30, 2011. Rep. Jerry Kooiman (R-Grand Rapids), sponsor of HB 6580, said the package, along with some Senate legislation, is a compromised agreement between himself, Rep. Chris Kolb (D-Ann Arbor) and sponsor of HB 6587 and Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood).

While his bill would still impose a 48-month lifetime limit and 90 sanctions on cash assistance recipients not meeting work requirements (a one year penalty would be assessed for the third noncompliance), several more "clockstoppers" have been added to the legislation this time around.

But Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow said that the administration is confident its jobs, education and training - JET - program will meet federal requirements. But she also promised that the administration would continue to work with the Legislature on a welfare reform proposal that protects children, helps individuals become self-sufficient and complies with federal requirements.

Cash assistance recipients who are able bodied would not be held to the 48 month limit for the time that their county's unemployment rate is at or above 9 percent, when the individual or a relative the individual is caring for becomes temporarily or permanently disabled and has medical documentation to show this, or when a person is working and in compliance with those state standards.

The lifetime limit would also not be retroactive, with the first recipients being placed under the system at the earliest of April 1, 2007. Mr. Kooiman said the remainder of beneficiaries would fall under the lifetime limit provision once the governor's Jobs, Education and Training Program (JET) is implemented statewide, which the Legislature has requested in the bill to be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

But the lifetime limit also comes with a 12-month extension clause if a person faces barriers to employment, such as the local labor market, problems with child care or transportation or if the state for some reason cannot meet its obligation to the education and training services its required to provide.

Recipients would also be able to have their first sanction terminated if they can show within two weeks of the violation that they are meeting their work requirements.

"If the person is really serious about it we're going to give them another chance," Mr. Kooiman said.

He also said that the legislation adds broad language for the department in terms of an earned income disregard. Under the legislation, individuals would be able to keep every \$2 of \$3 they earn from work and still receive their benefits. Currently a person can earn a maximum of \$200 plus 20 percent of their income before their benefits are taken away. Mr. Kooiman said that usually amounts to a \$10,000 income cap for a single parent with a couple kids, but with the new measure the family would be able to earn more and still receive benefits from the state.

The legislation also calls for individuals to go through an assessment, either done by the Department of Human Services or by an outside contractor.

Mr. Kolb's bill provides for additional specifications in the Work First program, including assessing a participant's education level and working on course completions from there. It also adds reporting measures the state would have to provide to the Legislature on the various programs.

Mr. Kooiman said that the package shows that Michigan is serious about making welfare a temporary assistance program while still breaking down the barriers for people to be self-sufficient.

The Department of Human Services is neutral on the bills, with Ron Hicks saying in committee that the director would like to see JET fully implemented and assessed by lawmakers before any changes are made to the program. He said the state should be able to reach the 50 percent average work participation requirements every month under the current system once its completely rolled out.

While there was no discussion on the House floor on the bills, in the Family and Children Services Committee Rep. Dudley Spade (R-Tipton) questioned whether someone could move to a county with a high unemployment rate to avoid having their benefit clock tick away. Mr. Kooiman said that it was possible that could happen, but that it was part of a compromise. He said currently people may move to Michigan because of its lack of benefit time limits.

MIRS News – November 30, 2006

House Puts Welfare Reforms Into Play

House Republicans passed a revamped batch of welfare reforms today on a divided vote, a signal that the out-going majority is serious about taking one final stab this term at establishing four-year lifetime limits on able-bodied recipients.

[HB 6578](#) and [HB 6587](#) moved out of committee in the morning and through the full House, 61-41, and, 64-39, respectively, this afternoon. But most Democrats aren't ready to jump aboard the new effort to guide welfare recipients off the system on the road to self-sufficiency.

The governor and Department of Human Services (DHS) aren't on board with the bills that one House member described as being "not necessarily soup...it's missing some ingredients."

But Rep. Jerry [KOOIMAN](#) (R-Grand Rapids), the lead on the package, said the House Republicans' latest offering basically gives Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) all of the exceptions she wanted put into a 48-month lifetime limit bill.

"Given that, I hope we can get this done," Kooiman said.

In the big picture, it's envisioned that the two bills would be linked with a Senate bill to establish a new welfare reform package that could work along with the DHS' new Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program, which it's relying on to fulfill stricter federal requirements on the number of welfare recipients on the path to finding employment.

Kooiman said he understands the DHS wants to wait three months before the Legislature puts overlapping reforms into place. However, the term-limited Kooiman said he sees no reason why the administration wouldn't want to put in place changes he believes would allow the state to meet the federal requirements and help people move off the cycle of poverty sooner rather than later.

The Republicans' latest offering keeps the four-year lifetime limit on receiving welfare, but creates exceptions for those with disabilities and care-givers, among others with extenuating circumstances. Kooiman said the bill gets at the people who are abusing the system, which has been the intent of the legislation all along.

Like a similar Senate package the legislation "stops the clock" on any recipient who is complying with a self-sufficiency program. The new bills allow for a one-year extension to the four-year limit that can be granted for a number of variables. It also allows recipients to get out of their first batch of sanctions for not complying with their get-to-work requirements under condition.

In reality, Kooiman's welfare reforms are becoming one of the House's final bargaining chips as the Senate, the House and the administration try to see their high-priority agenda items through the 93rd Legislature in the lame duck session. Kooiman has been working practically his entire final term on adopting reforms he believes are necessary to move people off the poverty of

public assistance and into jobs.

Senate Extends Welfare Sunset

In other welfare-related action, the Senate extended the sunset on welfare exemptions that would have expired by Dec. 31, 2006 by nine months. If the sunset is not extended, basically all of the current welfare recipients will be required to work and those working will be allowed to start collecting.

[SB 1500](#) moved the expiration date to September 2007. In the original version of [SB 1500](#) the extension would have expired in June 2007. However, the Senate passed a Sen. Gilda [JACOBS](#) (D-Huntington Woods) amendment that extends the sunset for nine months instead of six.

Jacobs said a nine-month rather than a six-month extension will allow the state to assess the effectiveness of the Jobs, Training Education (JET) Program, which will have solid results data by September 2007.

The other welfare bill that was similar to the House bill that moved in the lower chamber today ([SB 1501](#)) didn't go anywhere despite Sen. Bill [HARDIMAN](#)'s (R-Kentwood) insistence that the bill move. As it stands, [SB 1501](#) is identical to a welfare reform bill Gov. Jennifer [GRANHOLM](#) vetoed. The bill she vetoed would have put a 48-month life time limit on welfare recipients.

Hardiman's intention was to gut [SB 1501](#) on the floor, putting several exemptions and "clock stopping" options in with the 48-month limit. The Department of Human Services (DHS) requested that Hardiman hold off on the reforms until the JET program can be assessed.

Ron **HICKS**, with the DHS, estimated that the fall of 2007 would be a good time to look at the reforms. Hardiman agreed to extend the sunset until after the JET program can be assessed and now it looks like he might be doing the same with welfare reform.

December 1, 2006

Medicaid Plan Prods Patients Toward Health

By [ERIK ECKHOLM](#)

HAMLIN, W.Va. — No question, John Johnson is a doctor's nightmare.

Speaking from the easy chair where he spends his days in a small wooden house near this small Appalachian town, his left trouser leg folded by a safety pin where a limb was lost to diabetes, he lighted another cigarette.

Mr. Johnson, 61 and a former garbage collector, takes insulin and goes to a clinic once a month for diabetes checkups. Taxpayers foot the bill through Medicaid, the federal-state health coverage program for the poor.

But when doctors urged him to mind his diet, "I told them I eat what I want to eat and the hell with them."

"I've been smoking for 50 years — why should I stop now?" he added for good measure. "This is supposed to be a free world."

Ignoring doctors' orders may now start exacting a new price among [West Virginia's](#) Medicaid recipients. Under a reorganized schedule of aid, the state, hoping for savings over time, plans to reward "responsible" patients with significant extra benefits or — as critics describe it — punish those who do not join weight-loss or antismoking programs, or who miss too many appointments, by denying important services.

The incentive effort, the first of its kind, received quick approval last summer from the Bush administration, which is encouraging states to experiment with "personal responsibility" as a chief principle of their Medicaid programs. Idaho and Kentucky are also planning reward programs, though more modest ones, for healthful behavior.

In a pilot phase starting in three rural counties over the next few months, many West Virginia Medicaid patients will be asked to sign a pledge "to do my best to stay healthy," to attend "health improvement programs as directed," to have routine checkups and screenings, to keep appointments, to take medicine as prescribed and to go to emergency rooms only for real emergencies.

"We always talk about Medicaid members' rights, but rarely about their responsibilities," said Nancy Atkins, state commissioner of medical services.

"We're in an Appalachian culture where there's a fatalism, and many people don't go in for checkups or preventive services," Ms. Atkins said, noting that West Virginia had some of the country's highest rates of obesity, smoking, heart disease and diabetes. "We want to reach people before they get chronic and debilitating diseases that will keep them on Medicaid for the rest of their lives."

Those signing and abiding by the agreement (or their children, who account for a majority of Medicaid patients here) will receive "enhanced benefits" including mental health counseling, long-term diabetes management and cardiac rehabilitation, and prescription drugs and home health visits as needed, as well as antismoking and antiobesity classes. Those who do not sign will get federally required basic services but be limited to four prescriptions a month, for example, and will not receive the other enhanced

benefits.

In future years, those who comply fully will get further benefits (“like a Marriott rewards plan,” Ms. Atkins said), their nature to be determined but perhaps including orthodontics or other dental services.

No one questions that West Virginia, more than most other states, needs more healthful lifestyles and better primary and preventive care. But the new plan has stirred national debate about its fairness and medical ethics. A stinging editorial in [The New England Journal of Medicine](#) on Aug. 24 said it could punish patients for factors beyond their control, like lack of transportation; would penalize children for errors of their parents; would hold Medicaid patients to standards of compliance that are often not met by middle-class people; and would put doctors in untenable positions as enforcers.

“What if everyone at a major corporation were told they would lose benefits if they didn’t lose weight or drink less?” said a co-author of the editorial, Dr. Gene Bishop, a physician at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia.

Denying mental health aid to those who do not sign seems especially counterproductive, Dr. Bishop said in an interview.

“If you think about the people least able to do simple things like keep appointments and take all their medications,” she said, “people with mental health and substance abuse problems are right up there.”

Judith Solomon of the private Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, in Washington, said that the plan was unlikely to save West Virginia money or improve patient health and that it carried “the risk that some very vulnerable people may be denied health care they need.”

But Ms. Atkins, the state health official, said critics had misunderstood the plan, which, she said, simply “gives people rewards and incentives to improve their health.”

Here in Lincoln County, as in the two other counties in the pilot phase, there is a federally subsidized primary-care center that is a leader in developing “care management” programs, nudging people into preventive services and lifestyle changes voluntarily.

The Lincoln Primary Care Center in Hamlin, a town of 1,500 an hour’s winding drive west of Charleston, is a showcase for preventive medicine, with its own fitness center, an exercise physiologist, a dietary adviser and a mental health counselor — resources that are lacking in many rural clinics. The center stays open until 9 most nights, making it easier for sick people to come in for urgent care rather than driving to distant emergency rooms.

A former tobacco-growing area, Lincoln is one of the state’s poorest counties, with a population of 22,000 scattered through the hills. About 9,000 use this care center, a majority of them uninsured or on Medicaid, said Brian Crist, the chief executive.

Some doctors here and throughout the state were initially alarmed by the new rules, which were delayed six months for discussions and fine-tuning. But state officials appear to have allayed some fears, and many doctors are now taking a wait-and-see attitude.

Officials have offered assurances, for example — and Ms. Atkins emphasized in an interview — that doctors will be able to provide medically necessary drugs and care to children even if their parents have not followed the agreement. This was not clear in the written plan and may be needed in any case, critics said, to comply with federal law.

Dr. Syem B. Stoll, a physician at Lincoln, said the clinic's three-year-old effort to promote lifestyle changes for patients with hypertension, obesity, diabetes and other problems had already made a difference for many.

"We're doing a lot more than just giving people pills and sending them home," Dr. Stoll said.

Of the new Medicaid rules, he said: "My interactions with patients won't change — I am who I am. But giving people responsibility and initiative is the way to go."

In interviews with several residents of the Hamlin area, including Medicaid recipients, none said they had heard about the new rules.

When they were outlined for Mr. Johnson, the cantankerous diabetic, he said he had no intention of participating. "Hell, no," he said. "I wouldn't sign an agreement like that." Somewhat incongruously, he appears to be off the hook: as a disabled person he will be exempt under the rules.

Brittney Lovejoy, 18, earns \$5.40 an hour at the Burger King here and is a Medicaid patient at the Lincoln center, as are her 4-year-old daughter and 6-month-old son. "I guess I'll have to sign it," she said after hearing a description of the new agreement, apparently unenthusiastic about the idea though not foreseeing any major problems.

But Karen Ball, 35, a night manager at the Burger King, said she did not think the program was fair. Though Ms. Ball is uninsured herself — she uses the Lincoln clinic rarely, paying reduced fees — her three sons are on Medicaid. They go for their required annual checkups, so the agreement should pose no problem for them.

Still, "some people can't afford the transportation to go to these programs," she said, "between the price of gas and the lack of jobs here — and what jobs there are pay minimum wage."

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December 1, 2006

Clinton Helps Broker Deal for Medicine to Treat AIDS

By [CELIA W. DUGGER](#)

With the financial backing of a group of nations led by France, former President [Bill Clinton](#) announced Thursday that his foundation had negotiated deeply reduced prices for 19 [AIDS](#) drugs to treat children, halving the cost of the simplest-to-use therapy — three drugs combined in a single pill — to less than \$60 a year for each boy and girl.

The countries, France, Brazil, Britain, Norway and Chile, are putting up \$35 million to buy antiretroviral drugs and diagnostic tests to treat 100,000 more children in 40 nations next year. Most of the money was raised through taxes on airline tickets, a dedicated revenue source suited to ensuring the lifelong treatment of children with AIDS.

The Clinton Foundation, which has established a record of lowering AIDS drug prices in recent years, negotiated on the countries' behalf, using their pooled purchasing power to get volume discounts on the drugs.

The countries formed a new Geneva-based organization called Unitaid earlier this year to buy AIDS, [tuberculosis](#) and [malaria](#) drugs.

Only about 80,000 of the 660,000 children with AIDS who need treatment now get it, the [United Nations](#) AIDS agency estimates, and half the children who do not get the drugs die by the time they turn 2 years old. The United Nations Children's Fund, or [Unicef](#), has described children as the invisible face of the AIDS pandemic because they are so much less likely than adults to get life-saving medicines.

"Providing drugs of this quality at these prices makes it even easier to scale up treatment," said Peter McDermott, who runs Unicef's AIDS program. "Unicef is extremely excited by this."

In addition to the Unitaid money to buy the drugs, the Clinton Foundation has raised \$15 million to train doctors, upgrade pediatric wards and provide other assistance that the countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean will need to treat the additional 100,000 children next year.

Cipla and Ranbaxy Laboratories, Indian generic drug manufacturers, will be providing pills that combine three antiretroviral drugs into a single tablet, a formulation that is easier to transport, store and use than multiple pills and syrups. The combination tablets also need no refrigeration, an important advantage in poor countries lacking electricity, and can be dissolved in water for babies and infants too young to swallow pills.

Sandeep Juneja, the H.I.V. project head for Ranbaxy, said in a telephone interview that the company was able to provide the lower prices because of the larger volume of sales and because the Clinton Foundation, buying on Unitaid's behalf, would consolidate many small purchases. He explained that the market for pediatric AIDS drugs was relatively small, fragmented and spread thinly across many countries.

“It would be a nightmare handling those small orders,” he said. “Imagine 40 to 60 countries buying a few hundred bottles individually, with no way to predict how many bottles would be needed.”

The new prices for 19 pediatric AIDS drugs are on average 45 percent less than the lowest rates offered to poor countries in [Doctors Without Borders](#)’ listing of AIDS drug prices, and were more than 60 percent lower than the prices the [World Health Organization](#) reported were actually paid by developing countries, the foundation said.

Mr. Clinton announced the price reductions yesterday at a children’s hospital in New Delhi with [Sonia Gandhi](#), the leader of the Congress Party, which is the chief member of India’s coalition government. India is among the nation’s benefiting from Unitaid’s contributions.

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County seeks public input on new juvenile center

Friday, December 01, 2006

By Steve Gunn

CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A lot of people are talking about the need for a new Muskegon County Jail.

But county officials say the need for a new juvenile detention center, to replace the aging, crowded building in Whitehall Township, is nearly as great.

And officials are taking great care in the planning process for a new juvenile center, to make sure its location, design and treatment strategies meet the needs of the county's troubled youth.

That's why the county board is hosting a special public hearing at 3:30 p.m. Thursday to gather input from the public.

The hearing, part of the board's Ways and Means Committee meeting, will be in the county board chamber on the fourth floor of the Michael E. Kobza Hall of Justice. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend.

County officials have been slowly preparing county voters for an eventual ballot proposal that will seek a property tax increase to build a new jail and juvenile detention center.

The current juvenile center, at Whitehall Road and White Lake Drive, is often too crowded, needs a great deal of repair, is expensive to maintain, is not energy efficient and lacks air conditioning, according to Jack Niemiec, the county's director of finance and management services.

And it's too far away from the downtown Muskegon Michael E. Kobza Hall of Justice, where kids have to be driven on a regular basis for juvenile court hearings, Niemiec said.

The consensus seems to be to build both a jail and juvenile center in the vicinity of the hall of justice, Niemiec said.

The first part of the process for the county was hiring an independent firm to develop a master plan of county facilities, including the current jail and juvenile detention center.

Architects hired by that firm issued preliminary recommendations last summer for the size of a new jail and youth detention center. But county officials weren't completely satisfied with the recommendations for the juvenile center.

So they formed a "master plan study group" to dig deeper into the potential needs of troubled youth in the community, and learn how a new detention center might meet those needs.

The study group recently issued its tentative report, which calls for 24 to 32 detention beds, 16 treatment beds and two to four intake and observation beds, according to Niemiec.

As it turns out, those numbers nearly match the numbers recommended last summer by the architects.

At first, county officials thought they may need more beds than the architects were calling for.

They wanted to look at the possibility of having extra beds to rent to other counties that don't have room for all their youthful offenders, Niemiec said. But they eventually determined there would be little interest

among other counties, he said.

Officials also wanted to explore the idea of keeping more local special needs kids at the facility, rather than sending them to expensive out-of-town treatment centers. Kids in that category have put a huge financial strain on the county's Child Care Fund in recent years.

But after conferring with professionals and sources from other counties, local officials determined that it's often better for seriously troubled children to be sent away for specialized treatment, Niemiec said.

The study group is recommending some in-house treatment, but not as much as they originally thought possible, he said.

One goal now will be to identify alternative programs within the community where less severe youthful offenders can be referred, so the population of the new juvenile center doesn't get too large again, Niemiec said.

"We didn't mind slowing down (the planning process) so that, as a community, we could look at this and make sure we feel comfortable with it," Niemiec said.

The preliminary draft report of the master plan study group was recently presented to the Youth Advisory Council of the Community Foundation for Muskegon County.

That council, comprised of local teens, this year directed \$30,000 toward construction of a new juvenile detention center. The teens reviewed the draft report and offered their comments, Niemiec said.

Now the general public will offer input at the public hearing. Officials will be particularly interested in finding ideas for programs that might help youthful offenders, Niemiec said.

Public input will be incorporated into a final study group report, which will then be forwarded to the firm doing the master plan on behalf of the county, Niemiec said.

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ILE CAMERA

Family faces homelessness due to unpaid bill

By Bobby Ampezzan
, Heritage Newspapers

GROSSE ILE — On an island where million-dollar homes might not even feature water frontage, families on the verge of homelessness might seem like a mainland problem.

But one woman is desperate to find \$1,500 for a single utility invoice — her water bill — or she and her four children will have to find another place to live.

Paulette, who asked that her last name be withheld, is one of a fast-growing segment of the homeless population in Michigan — the head of a family on the verge of or newly homeless.

She has been living on Social Security disability for years for two main reasons: a series of medical crises and two sons who require unusual care.

She said she left her job as a credit union manager in 1991 after she was sexually assaulted by her boss.

What followed was an emotionally devastating court case that left her with a small cash award and years of what doctors diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder, she said.

A few years later, her health got worse when she fought, successively, uterine, stomach and breast cancer.

Today, if she were to follow her doctor's orders, she said, her prescriptions would run about \$500 a month. In good months, she said, she's able to purchase half the recommended medicine.

At about the time she was first stricken with cancer, her second husband, the father of three of her children, left the family, she said, because he couldn't deal with his autistic sons' behavior, and the family lost its house.

She has not been romantically involved since, she said, because "if their own father wouldn't stick it out"

Today, between her two ex-husbands, she is owed more than \$100,000 in back child support payments, she said.

Two of Paulette's sons — Stephen, 14, and Alexander, 11 — suffer from autism at different ends of the spectrum. Autism can cause deficits in social interaction and communication, among other symptoms.

Stephen requires daily physical therapy, is not toilet trained, and some time ago, when getting his haircut, Paulette said he grew so frightened that he grabbed the scissors away from her and stabbed her with them.

Alexander, though he is sufficiently verbal and self-possessed to begin taking regular education classes recently, still occasionally runs away from home without motive and hides in the woods. The rest of the family then must search for him.

Paulette's predicament as a parent mirrors her financial situation: were she to take full-time employment and throw herself into the ranks of the "working poor," she would lose much of the public assistance she relies on; similarly, she would have to find a caretaker for her children.

That is what aid agencies call being "penalized."

"I missed food stamps by \$18 last time," she said.

Currently, Paulette lives on \$1,378 in Social Security benefits, and \$178 for each of three of her children (the oldest, Jordan, is 18).

She makes "too much money for food stamps," said Denise Lake, a homeless prevention case manager with the Wayne-Metropolitan Community Action Agency in Wyandotte and Paulette's caseworker. "The parent's at risk because she doesn't have health insurance, but the kids do.

"They're in worse shape than somebody who's receiving aid."

But Paulette's family does receive assistance from a number of agencies.

From The Guidance Center in Southgate, physical therapists Tracy Hgilo and Jerry Gratiot spend many hours weekly working with Stephen and Alexander independently.

From the Salvation Army, the family members purchase clothes and housewares for their largely unfurnished home.

Paulette said much of the food purchased comes from Aldi, a national reduced-price, off-brand food store, though they are helped, too, by the Sacred Heart Ministries' food pantry on Grosse Ile, where they can get fresh produce and meats.

And for everything else, including financial aid for rent and utility arrearages, Lake and Wayne-Metro CAA bear much of the weight.

"She's so used to the word 'no' after being told 'yes' that it's almost become a mainstay with her," Lake said. "But I'm not used to it. It's not right."

But the fact is, Lake should be used to it — in the homeless prevention program, she services about 100 clients yearly.

"So many people end up on the street who really don't have major issues," Lake said. "If there were more programs on these types of services, I'm not sure we'd find as many people in shelters."

Still, the agency can only afford to employ five outreach workers.

"There's still more (clients) waiting," said Mia Rye, communications director for the agency. "... There's always someone waiting to get on this list."

In the state, according to the Office of Supportive Housing and Homeless Initiatives, in just the first half of this year about 8,500 adults and children at risk for homelessness were served by state aid as part of the homeless prevention component of emergency shelter grants.

This sub-population is not yet being counted among the approximately 50,000 homeless in the state, officials said.

The funds distributed to prevent homelessness went largely to short-term payments on rent and utility bills that have fallen into arrears.

The agency doled out about \$370,000 in the last fiscal year to 130 households for rent and mortgage assistance, and about 300 households for home heating assistance.

Nearly 40 percent of all the state's homeless, according to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, are families with children.

Shirley McKee, a case manager for Wayne-Metro CAA, said "more of middle America" is calling because of corporate downsizing.

Terry Morreau, who runs the food pantry at Sacred Heart Catholic Church and is on the

board at Wayne-Metro CAA, said it is common for her to arrive at the office to three phone calls from people facing eviction in Grosse Ile, Brownstown Township, Wyandotte and across the area.

Lake said families on the verge of homelessness often go without basic needs like transportation and/or day care.

According to a recent report compiled by a number of agencies in the area, many facing homelessness are reluctant to accept preventive services because they are "working families with children who want very much not to be counted" among the most destitute.

Rye said that is a mistake.

"The fact that there are resources out there in the community (means) there are many people in Paulette's situation," she said.

Asked if the agency or any agency could come up with the \$1,500 Paulette needs to stay in her home, Lake said, "I'm not pessimistic, because I have to carry her emotionally."

Still, grant money for utility bills does not cover water bills, and Lake and Paulette said they believe the landlord would welcome an eviction.

Paulette is not confident the bill will be paid before the new year, and underpinning the looming prospect of losing her house are two tough truths: If she is forced to find a home elsewhere, she might well lose the superior education disabled children on the island receive free (such as at the Lincoln Center in Wyandotte or Miller Elementary School in Huron).

Or worse, if Paulette has to accept living in a shelter, Stephen and Alexander could be institutionalized.

She has witnessed the level of care afforded those indigent and disabled, and said that is her greatest fear for her sons.

"I have a strong faith in God that this is just the hand I've been dealt," she said. "What makes me happy now is just seeing my children happy."

But with every passing day, even her children feel the pressure.

"What depresses me most is seeing my brother, Adam (13), who isn't in special (education), he's on the honor roll, and he's not even going to have it as good as I did," Jordan said.

Paulette, who said she hasn't been to the movies in more than 10 years, said she's holding out for a Hollywood ending to this holiday season.

For more information about the Wayne-Metro Community Action Agency, visit www.waynemetro.org.

Denise Lake can be contacted at 1-734-955-2461.

To contact the food pantry and outreach work at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, call Morreau at 1-734-676-1378, ext. 232.

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http://www.ilecamera.com/stories/120106/loc_20061201001.shtml



Help the hungry

Consider Food Bank envelope in today's Flint Journal

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, December 01, 2006

When some curious person, generations from now, examines how the Flint area kept body and soul together during the current economic difficulties, we trust he or she won't overlook the importance of the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan.

However, to assure that future history, this remarkable charity must continue to receive outstanding public support. Today, The Flint Journal makes it a little easier to give, as a Food Bank donation envelope is inserted in this newspaper for any contribution you'd care to make.

If the past is any predictor, our readers will be generous again in helping the Food Bank serve a growing number of hungry people by raising a record amount of money. This year's campaign goal is \$600,000, which will be multiplied 14 to 1 in food purchases for a 22-county area.

Sadly, every can, box or bag will be needed. More than 50,000 people are helped by the Food Bank weekly, with 71 percent of the recipients earning less than \$15,000 a year. In better times, many of them would have been givers themselves, but plummeting auto industry payrolls and other circumstances have turned the tables.

Fortunately, there are established and credible organizations dedicated to easing their plight, and none is more efficient at meeting basic needs than the Food Bank, now in its 25th year. During the past decade, it's been The Journal's privilege to partner with the Food Bank in the annual Face of Hunger campaign during the holidays.

However, the most crucial support comes from the volunteers who labor for this vital agency year-round, and, of course, those who supply the dollars. Will you please be one of them?

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Published December 1, 2006

[From Lansing State Journal]

Friday's letters to the editor

Be accountable

I have been fighting with the Washtenaw County Friend of the Court for the last 15 years to get it to adhere to the mandates set forth by the Friend of the Court Act of 1982, Michigan Compiled Laws and the Michigan Child Support Formula Manual. During this time, it has violated many of the laws meant to ensure everyone is treated equally.

I attempted to get help from Gov. Jennifer Granholm, Attorney General Mike Cox, State Court Administrator Carl Gromek and Friend of the Court Bureau Administrator Dan Wright, to no avail. Everyone passed the buck.

MCL 552.526 provides for a grievance procedure that allows anyone with a problem to request action. In my case, Chief Judge Archie Brown failed to follow the law and ignored every grievance I filed. Who holds the Friend of the Court accountable?

Tim Miller
Lansing

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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December 1, 2006

Unger's future earnings go to sons

The two boys of murdered Huntington Woods woman awarded \$10M judgment.

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- The estate for the sons of Mark Unger was awarded a \$10 million default judgment this week against the former Huntington Woods man for the October 2003 death of his wife at a northern Michigan resort.

Following a lengthy jury trial earlier this year, Unger, 45, was convicted of first-degree murder in the death of his wife.

Florence Unger, 37, was found floating face down in Lower Herring Lake in Arcadia.

He is serving a life sentence with no chance for parole but has hired an attorney to handle his appeal. He was served with the lawsuit in Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia but did not contest it, according to the River Place Trust attorney, Alan A. May.

May said under the judgment received Thursday from Oakland Circuit Judge Denise Langford-Morris they will seek \$250,000 in life insurance, Unger's highly mortgaged and vacant Huntington Woods home (with a value of more than \$600,000), and about \$80,000 in properties Unger had owned with his wife.

"If he ever tries to do anything like O.J. Simpson did (Simpson wrote the book 'If I Did It'), we'll go after that, too," May said.

"Under state law, a person cannot profit from a death for which they are responsible."

All proceeds will go into a trust set up by maternal grandparents Harold and Clair Stern, for their grandchildren, Max, 13, and Tyler, 10, May said.

The Oakland Circuit Court judgment will stand even if the conviction against Unger is ever reduced or re-versed, May said.

The Ungers were in the midst of divorce in 2003 when they visited the Watervale resort with their sons. Florence Unger was found in the lake near a boathouse the couple had visited the night before. Unger said he had left his wife out on the deck alone and he returned to a nearby cottage where he fell asleep with his sons.

Two medical examiners testified Florence Unger fell or was pushed off the deck and struck her head on the concrete apron below, suffering severe head injuries. Both said it would not have been possible for her to move herself to where she was found in the water.

Unger, who always maintained his innocence, was arrested in May 2004.

A Benzie County jury found him guilty in June 2006.

May said monetary damages against Unger were determined by several factors, including the personal loss felt by Florence Unger's parents and her sons, and how Florence Unger, a bank loan officer at the time of her death, stood to make more than \$4 million had she worked until retirement age.

You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or mmartindale@detnews.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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December 1, 2006

Social services agency seeks people to adopt families

Shortage of donors forces Detroit group to stop taking families who need help.

Oralandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- The Rev. Faith Fowler hates having to turn people in need away, but the lingering downturn in Michigan's economy has stretched her charity organization to the seams.

Cass Community Social Services has had to halt its adoption of needy families because there are more seeking help than there are sponsors who can help.

"We cut off taking new people because we don't have everybody adopted yet," said Fowler, executive director of Cass Community and senior pastor of Cass Community United Methodist Church on Cass in Detroit. "We still have about 200 to be adopted."

Fowler is looking for people to help families, individuals, people with developmental disabilities and senior citizens this holiday season.

This year has been challenging, Fowler said.

"People who had jobs before lost them or people who have jobs are worried about losing them," she said. "Money is tight."

But, she said, she holds out hope that even cash-strapped givers will dig into their pockets to help others this season.

"People in this area are generally very generous," Fowler said.

Cass Community requires those in need to document their need, she said.

Then, the needy "fill out a list of what they would like to get," Fowler said.

"Generally people are happy to get what they can get," she said.

Cass Community provides social services at eight locations in Detroit.

It is one of the many agencies trying to fill a need for Metro Detroit families and individuals this holiday season.

To adopt a family or individual, call Cass Community Social Services at (313) 883-2277.

You can reach Oralandar Brand- Williams at (313) 222-2027 or bwilliams@detnews.com.

Helping Hands

Helping Hands is joining with United Way for Southeastern Michigan this holiday season to help the needy. Here's how it works:

Need help?

If you need charitable assistance this season, call 211 or (800) 552-1183 in Metro Detroit to contact the United Way 211 call center.

The Detroit News will feature stories of those in need throughout the holiday season.

Want to help?

To contribute year-round to United Way, go to www.onewaytohelp.org or call 211.

If you want to help people in need, call the same numbers to offer your services or donations.

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Ludington Daily News

Posted: 11-30-2006

Event raises \$2,754 for André Bosse Kids House

Competition over the best-tasting chili was tense with a lot of bantering back and forth for the weeks leading up to the 2nd Annual Potluck Chili Cookoff to benefit the André Bosse Kids House.

Efforts paid off Wednesday night at the Elks Lodge, and the benefit raised \$2,754 all together between donations and entry.

Out of 12 local organizations competing, West Michigan Community Mental Health took first place with \$642, the **Department of Human Services** came in second with \$504 and third was the Mason County Prosecutor's Office with \$220.

Winners were determined by how much money was put in the buckets for each organization.

Megan Maltbie of the Kids House said the event was much a bigger event this year than last. The organization may look for a larger venue for next year and may ask participants to bring a larger amount of chili.

United Way giving slumps

Trio of issues arises to cause large drop in honored pledges

Friday, December 01, 2006

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

News Staff Reporter

Layoffs and early buyouts at area auto plants have caused a significant drop in the number of United Way pledges that will be honored this year. That, Washtenaw United Way officials say, will force reductions in payouts to the agencies they support.

The nonprofit raises money for 112 programs at 34 health and human service agencies in Washtenaw County that help young people succeed, assist seniors and support and strengthen families and individuals.

Three issues have arisen this year that have hit the United Way hard enough to force layoffs of its own staff in addition to the cuts to the agencies: Revenues are coming in well below 2005 pledges, the 2006 fund drive hit a record low and as more companies hire other companies to handle payroll, fewer are paying the United Way to process employee deductions.

Executive Director Sandra Rupp and Chief Financial Officer Marjo Daum laid it out for the United Way directors during a Nov. 8 board meeting: Uncollectible pledges will be 5 percent to

8 percent higher than originally projected and the 2006 campaign, which officially ended two weeks ago, hit a record low. The campaign closed with pledges totaling just 61 percent of the \$8 million goal. Today it stands at 67 percent.

The United Way notified its agencies that cuts will be made in the checks issued in January. Rupp said the final decision on the size of those cuts will be made by the board Tuesday.

The agency laid off three of its 10 full-time employees this week: fund distribution director Dinella Crosby, communications director Char Luttrell and the only administrative assistant. To account for the loss of processing fees, Daum said, the agency made significant cuts in its own budget.

The situation is not as dire in Livingston County, where United Way Executive Director Nancy Rosso said donations are keeping pace with last year, although she would not disclose the amount. The annual campaign is still under way in Livingston.

Rosso said everyone is concerned about the weak economy, but she said more people are empathetic and see the need for giving. The Livingston agency is more focused this year on increasing the number of donors and the number of people being helped, she said, than raising a specific dollar amount. Last year the agency raised \$1.6 million.

After learning about the cuts in Washtenaw County, HelpSource Director Susan Crabb said Wednesday that "most nonprofits are already reeling. There have been a lot of funding cuts this year," she said, and the news of more cuts "is just one more blow."

HelpSource handles adoptions, foster care, counseling, teen-parenting education and support and elder day care, among other services. Crabb said the new round of cuts means HelpSource will see fewer clients.

"Most nonprofits are running pretty bare-bones right now," she said. "Before, we put the dollars into client services, and cut other things. But we don't have anything left to cut."

Unfulfilled pledges

United Way operates almost entirely on the donations pledged during the fall fund drive and deducted in small increments from area workers' paychecks. The agency typically uses about 7 percent of those donations to pay its staff to collate, count, allocate and distribute the money, and to support the fundraising efforts in individual workplaces.

Not all pledges are honored each year, Rupp said, mostly because payroll deductions stop when an employee leaves a company. The agency accounts for that in its budget. For the 2005 campaign year, Daum projected 7.12 percent of the \$8.3 million pledged would go uncollected.

In Washtenaw County, thousands of auto industry workers have been laid off or have taken early buyouts after those pledges were made in the fall of 2005. Many other companies also reduced their workforces.

From July to September this year, Daum said, revenues from pledged payroll deductions dropped 6 percent more than the 7.12 percent projected.

New program costs

Technically, the agencies are taking another 1 percent cut this year, but it's one most have supported. Washtenaw United Way started using 1 percent of the donations to operate two programs of its own: the 211 call center and Success by 6, an initiative to help children under the age of 6 get the help they need to get on track for success.

Daum said agencies did not react negatively to the call center because "they realize it helps them get their services known to people." At the 24-hour center, operators take calls from people who need help, be it food, housing, clothing, counseling, medical treatment, assistance with utility bills or child care, and they then connect callers with the agencies that can help best.

Time for change

Rupp said she knows the drop in pledges and the record-low campaign drive are signs of the times - and a notice that United Way must change the way it does business.

"We won't leave any rock unturned in this," she said.

She admitted this fall's campaign was not run as aggressively as possible, but she didn't realize the gubernatorial race and other election issues would take as much attention and money away from United Way as they apparently did. Rupp said she believes educators, particularly the huge numbers of them at the county's two large universities, gave their money and attention to the education proposal on the November ballot rather than the United Way campaign.

Jim Balmer, executive director of the Dawn Farm substance abuse treatment program, said Wednesday that the local United Way has been too dependent for too long on auto industry workers. It's going to have to rethink that, he said.

As for the cuts Dawn Farm will take, Balmer said his agency has "sort of learned to roll with the punches." He's even "sort of optimistic."

"One of the things I've learned about the community is it's amazing in its capacity to give," Balmer said. This year has been "challenging," but by raising fees for private-pay clients and cutting wherever possible, he said he has not had to cut programs or staff.

Rupp said she is considering one-time fundraisers in addition to the annual United Way campaign, and might ask companies to give information to employees about making their pledges good when they change jobs.

Crabb said everyone is feeling the ramifications. "Our problem is when things get tough, our (client) population increases, but the dollars don't."

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or

734-482-1166.



Human Services project advances

Friday, December 01, 2006

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The state House and Senate's Joint Capitol Outlay Committee on Thursday approved a 20-year lease with Kent County for a new \$27 million Department of Human Services building.

County officials last month approved the lease and issuance of bonds to pay for the project, expected to be completed by 2008.

Thursday's move leaves only one hurdle for the project: approval by the state administration board.

The new 126,000-square-foot facility to be located at the Sheldon Complex campus, 121 Franklin St. SE, will replace an aging and cramped one at 415 Franklin St. SE and will house state food stamp, cash assistance, job training and welfare programs in about 80 percent of the building while the county's job training and health clinic will occupy the rest.

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News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Michigan Department of Human Services Revokes the Family Day Care Home Certificate of Registration Number DF820257026 of Bertha Johnson

November 30, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued a notice of intent to revoke the certificate of registration of Wayne County family day care home provider Bertha Johnson, 11755 Birwood, Detroit, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care family home.

The November 28, 2006, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding caregiver and child care home family, caregiver responsibilities and supervision. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

When served the Notice, Ms. Johnson accepted immediate revocation through a settlement agreement. Effective November 30, 2006, Bertha Johnson no longer holds a license and is prohibited from operating a family day care home at 11755 Birwood, Detroit, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time.

Ms. Johnson has held a certificate of registration to operate a family day care home since January 5, 2004. The certificate of registration was for six children.

Michigan law defines a day care family home "as a private home in which 1 but fewer than 7 minor children are received for care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.